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I am writing in support of LD 1663 because I believe that education is critical to the future of our waterways. Even prior to the introduction of wake boats, motorboat wakes created a safety hazard for those paddling and swimming in our lakes, as well as the wildlife inhabiting them. That safety hazard has increased many times over, now that wake boats have arrived on our increasingly crowded lakes. In the absence of legislative limits to the size and use of large motorboats, education is our only - and absolutely critical - solution. I only ask - will it be enough?



On Kezar Lake, we have nest cam pictures of our loon platforms being both tipped (left image) and washed out (center and right images) by the wake of a passing boat. Not surprisingly, just days after being laid, an intact loon egg was found at the bottom of the lake beneath the platform, likely caused by the passing of a motorboat. These large wakes were generated within 200 feet of shore, a violation that may have well been avoided had they understood the impact of their actions. Having an educational opportunity to highlight such photos and explain the impacts of wakes on nesting loons may have saved these and other nesting attempts.

Boaters, as well as swimmers, are affected by large wakes. I used to carry out all of my loon monitoring work from a Grand Lake Streamer square back canoe outfitted with an electric trolling motor. I am now no longer able to put that boat in the water after being nearly tipped over by passing wake boats on multiple occasions. Likewise, I have watched kayakers and paddle boards struggle to stay upright due to boats creating large wakes, both near small craft and within 200 feet of shore.

If we are to depend on the good sense of our boat operators to keep our waterways safe, then education is mandatory. LD1663 is a first step in this direction. Educating Maine's younger boat operators as to the safety hazards they potentially create is a seed that we must plant. Reinforcing that education affect the actions of all boaters will be an important next step.